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A

TREATISE

ON THE

THEORY AND PRACTICE

OF

DANCING,

WITH AN APPROPRIATE POEM,

IN TWO CANTOS,

AND

PLATES ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE ART.

BY JAMES P. CASSIDY,
PROFESSOR OF DANCING.

"—— *Those move easiest who have learned to Dance.*"
POPE.

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TO THE

NOBILITY AND GENTRY

OF

IRELAND,

THIS

TREATISE ON DANCING

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR OBEDIENT

AND VERY HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

TO THE READER.

NOTWITHSTANDING the variety and multiplicity of elaborate works, written in our language, not only on the sciences, arts and trades, conducive to the good of society, but on the most trivial and unimportant subjects; yet, on Dancing, an art equally ornamental as it is necessary and useful, few treatises, if any, have appeared since the general diffusion of knowledge through the agency of the press.

To

To supply this deficiency in English literature, to remove the obstacles which have hitherto prevented a more universal knowledge of this graceful accomplishment, to point out the necessity of its more general adoption and of its being more uniformly attended to by our Irish nobility and gentry, and to facilitate its acquisition by the aid of a few easy precepts deduced from many years experience and practice; such have been the favorite objects which the author of the following work had in view.

The production of a treatise, corresponding with those ideas and objects, required a variety of qualifications.

An

An early initiation under the best instructors, an ambition of arriving at superior excellence, an experimental knowledge derived from professional practice for a series of years in the fashionable circles, a particular attention to the stile of dancing in its different modes and varying fashions, a contemplation of the beauties and graces of which it is susceptive, and a close observance of the conformation of the limbs with the mechanical principles on which bodily action and muscular motion depend, are a combination of acquirements on which the author, however reluctant he feels in making so ostentatious an acknowledgment, founds his pretensions to the competency and capability requsite for writing

writing the Treatise on Dancing here presented to the Irish public.

In this essay will be found a comprehensive and clear explanation of the definitions, precepts, and rules necessary for learning the various attitudes, positions and steps employed in that art, with an historical account of Dancing, whether used as a religious ceremony, a festive entertainment, or military exercise among the Jews, Greeks and other nations, both ancient and modern.

The natural alliance between music and dancing together with the effects of the former over animate and inanimate bodies, are also exhibited and explained

explained; and the whole interspersed with some pleasant anecdotes illustrative of the subject.

Though clearness and precision have been particularly aimed at in describing the mechanical parts of the art; yet as the positions and attitudes are more effectually represented by pourtrayed figures than by words, the author has, at no small expence, engaged the assistance of the first artist in the Irish metropolis for delineating them on copper, and exhibiting the whole at one view.

The parents and guardians of youth will find the present work both important and interesting; as besides its subject,

subject, it contains many very material observations and reflections on the various defects of children, with plain, easy and efficient modes of obviating all such defects whether natural or acquired.

On the whole, the author rests his claim to public patronage on the novelty and merit of a work, which professes to teach the prepossessing and conciliatory accomplishments of a genteel deportment and polite address, and ultimately qualify youth for being introduced into the sacred temple of the graces.

JAMES P. CASSIDY.

53, Jervis-street.

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THE

A

TREATISE

ON THE

ART OF DANCING.

BOOK I.

HISTORY AND THEORY OF DANCING.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE NECESSITY OF EXERCISE, &c.

THE principal intention of the present publication is, besides that of shewing the antiquity, explaining the terms, and teaching the Art of Dancing, to point out the necessity of its more early adoption in our Irish academies and Schools, as a wholesome recreation, and health-preserving exercise for the agreeable employment of youth during those hours necessarily set apart for relaxation from their severer studies in the career of intellectual improvement. As there are many parents

and guardians, however, though well inclined otherwise to give their children a genteel education, who do not consider the importance of this art, and consequently neglect its cultivation till their children are too far advanced in years to be capable of acquiring graceful movements; the following preliminary observations, therefore, on the utility of this accomplishment are most respectfully submitted to their perusal and consideration.

How useful, how agreeable soever, study may be to the mind, it is very far from being equally salutary to the body. Every one observes, that the Creator has formed an intimate connection between the body and the mind; a perpetual action and re-action by which the body instantly feels the disorders of the mind and the mind those of the body. The delicate springs of our frail machines lose their activity and become enervated, and the vessels are choked by obstructions, when we totally

totally desist from exercise, and the consequence necessarily affects the brain.

A merely studious and sedentary life is therefore equally prejudicial to the body and the mind. The limbs likewise become stiff, we contract an aukward, constrained manner, a certain disgustful air attends all our actions, and we become very nearly as disagreeable to ourselves as to others.

An inclination to study is highly commendable, but it ought not, however, to inspire us with an aversion to society. The natural lot of man is to live among his fellows, and whatever may be the condition of our birth, or our situation in life, there are a thousand occasions where people must naturally desire to render themselves agreeable: to be active and adroit, and to dance with grace and elegance is the most pleasing and agreeable of all accomplishments.

A liberal and learned education is, doubtless, one of the noblest and most desirable acquisitions of life, as no person without it can be truly accounted genteel, and a person with it is entitled to some honor. But it so happens, from some concurrence of circumstances, that those who are most disposed to improve, and whose minds are best calculated for the reception of accomplishments, are often debared from acquiring them; while others, who have every means in the world, save inclination, squander those means in dissipation; subverting at once every particle of health, education and morality. Though it is in the power of but very few to become adepts in universal knowledge, every one, certainly, in whatever situation, is capable in some degree, as far as is consistent with that situation, of attaining so many accomplishments as to maintain an easy, affable and pleasing conduct in society. To please, and be pleased, is one of the grand ends

ends of education, I mean of the inferior parts of education: and though the want of this be in the mouth of every one, the exertion to acquire it, is, it seems, generally dormant.

To be perfectly accomplished may, indeed, require the application of years; yet a small but sincere attention to a few things, added to a desire of pleasing, may very soon and very easily supply, in a great measure, the want of a fine education.

For with the possession of all the knowledge in the world, there is a something in the carriage and address of every person still necessary to render him agreeable. The inferior branches of education are, certainly, never to be despised, even by the most learned. A gentleman cannot be called accomplished, without the art of dancing. How disgusting is it to see a man enter a room that cannot dance a common step, did I say step, I should

should have said, that cannot enter it or take off his hat without a degree of aukwardness. To persons in the higher and middle classes of life, I would strongly recommend a moderate skill in this art; for nothing tends more to refine their address and prepare them for Society. With ladies, indeed, it is indispensible, and a gentleman cannot mix in social life without it.

It is my intention to consider the practical part of this art, and I shall therefore endeavour briefly to point out the principles on which this practice is founded, and to shew in what manner genius is here concerned, what it is that forms the talent of a Dancer, and what is that beauty of expression, which has caused dancing to be ranked among the polite arts.

But before we proceed to the analysis of this art, such as it now is, it will be necessary

to

to say a few words on the dances of the ancients, and of their several kinds, in order to facilitate the understanding of what is to follow.

Many sovereigns have founded particular academies, where this art has been taught either solely to the young nobility and gentry, or to the citizens in general; and have appointed professors in the colleges for the same purpose. This art cannot, certainly, be learned without masters; and it is no small advantage to meet with such as proceed on clear and solid principles. As many have attempted to teach this art without the least knowledge of music, it is, therefore, necessary that they who commence the profession of a dancer, ought at least, to know the first principels of music and to make themselves well acquainted with the times and measures marked therein, in order to be the better enabled to convey their instructions according to the true method.

CHAPTER II.

DEFINITION AND HISTORY OF DANCING.

DANCING, as at present practised, may be defined "an agreeable motion of the body, adjusted by art to the measures or tune of instruments, or of the Voice," but according to what we reckon more agreeable to the true genius of the art, "Dancing is the art of expressing the sentiments of the mind, or the passions, by measured steps or bounds made in cadence, by regulated motions of the body, and by graceful gestures; all performed to the sound of musical instruments, or the voice, and which forms at once, an exercise agreeable to the Performer, and pleasing to the Spectator."

Almost

Almost from the first accounts we have of mankind, in history, we are told of their dancing; we must not imagine, however, that the dances of the first inhabitants of both worlds, or all those of ancient nations, were like such as are practised in our days; for we cannot suppose that when the royal Prophet David danced before the ark, he did it in the step of a minuet or country dance, as that would present a very strange idea, and not very compatible with our notion of ancient times.

There is no account of the origin of the practice of dancing among mankind, yet it is found to exist among all nations whatsoever, even the most rude and barbarous; and indeed, however much the assistance of art may be necessary to make any one perfect in the practice, the foundation must certainly lie in the machination of the human body itself.

CHAPTER III.

EFFECTS OF MUSIC ON ANIMATE AND INANIMATE BODIES.

THE connection existing between certain sounds and these motions of the human body, called Dancing, hath seldom or ever been enquired into by philosophers, though it is certainly a very curious speculation. The power of certain sounds not only over the human species, but even over the inanimate creation, is indeed very surprising. It is well known the most solid walls, nay the ground itself will be found to shake at some particular notes in music; this strongly indicates the presence of some universally difused and exceedingly elastic fluid, which is thrown into vibration by the concussion of the atmosphere upon it, produced by the motion

of

of the sounding body; if these concussions are so strong as to make the large quantity of elastic fluid vibrate, that is dispersed through a stone wall, or a considerable portion of the earth, it is no wonder it should have the same effect upon that invisible and exceedingly subtile matter that pervades and seems to reside in our nerves.

Some there are that have their nerves constructed in such a manner, that they cannot be affected by the sounds which affect others, and some scarce with any; while others have such an irritability of the nerves in this case that they cannot, without the greatest difficulty, sit or stand still when they hear a favorite piece of music played.

It is conjectured, by very eminent philosophers, that all the sensations and passions to which we are subject, do immediately depend upon the vibrations excited in the nervous

nervous fluid above mentioned. Hence musical sounds have the greatest power over those people who are of a delicate, sensible frame, and who have strong passions. If it be true, therefore, that every passion in human nature immediately depends upon a certain affection of the nervous system, or a certain motion or vibration in the nervous fluid, we shall immediately see the origin of the different Dances among different nations. One kind of vibration, for instance, raises those passions of anger, pride, &c. which are indispensably necessary for warlike nations; the sounds which are capable of exciting a similar vibration, would naturally constitute the martial music among such nations; and Dances conformably to it would be instituted. This appears to be the case among barbarous nations, as we shall presently have occasion to remark. Other vibrations of the nervous fluid produce the passions of joy, love, &c. and sounds capable

of

of exciting these particular vibrations, will be immediately formed into music for Dances of another kind.

As barbarous people are observed to have the strongest passions, so they are the most easily affected by sounds, and the most addicted to dancing. Sounds, to us the most disagreeable, the drumming with sticks upon an empty cask, or the noise made by blowing into reeds, incapable of yielding any musical note tolerable to us, is agreeable music to them. Much more are they affected by the sounds of instruments which have any thing agreeable in them.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IV.

UNIVERSALITY OF DANCING AMONG ANCIENT AND MODERN NATIONS.

THE spirit of Dancing prevails almost beyond imagination among both men and women in most parts of Africa; it is even more than instinct, it is a rage in some countries in that part of the globe, upon the Gold Coast especially, the inhabitants are so passionately fond of it, that, in the midst of their hardest labour, if they hear a person sing, or any musical instrument played, they cannot refrain from dancing. There are, even, well attested stories of some negroes flinging themselves at the feet of an European, playing on a violin, entreating him to desist unless he had a mind to tire them to death, it being impossible for them to cease dancing while he continued playing.

The

The same thing is found to take place in America; though, as the inhabitants of that continent are found to be of a more fierce and barbarous nature than the African nations their dances are still more uncouth, for they have also their dancing and music but in the most discordant and barbarous stile. For their music they have wooden drums, something in form of a kettle drum, with a kind of pipe or flagellet made of a hollow cane or reed, but very grating to an European ear. It is observed that they love every thing which makes a noise, how disagreeable soever the sound be. They will also hum over something like a tune when they dance 30 or 40 in a circle stretching out their hands, and laying them on each others shoulders; they stamp and jump and use the most antic gestures for several hours till they are heartly wearied, and one or two of the company sometimes will step out of the ring to make sport for the rest, by shewing feats of activity. They wing their lances up into the

air

air, catching them again, bending backwards and springing forwards with great agility.

The Greeks had martial Dances which they accounted very useful for keeping up the warlike spirit of their youth, but the Romans, though equally warlike with the Greeks, seem not to have had any thing of that kind; this may be probable owing to the want of that romantic turn for which the Greeks were so remarkable; the Romans had no heroes among them, such as Hercules, Achilles, or Ajax, nor does the whole Roman history furnish an example of a general, that made war after the manner of Alexander the Great. Though their soldiers were as valiant as ever the Greeks could pretend to be, the object with them was the honour of the republic, and not their own personal praise; hence there was less fury and much more cool deliberate valour exercised by the Romans than by any other nation whatsoever. The

passions

passions of pride, resentment, obstinacy, &c. were excited in them not by the mechanical means of music and dancing, but by being taught that it was their chief honour to fight for the republic. It does not however appear that the Romans were, at all, less capable of being affected by dancing and music, than the Greeks. When dancing was once introduced it had the same effect at Rome as at Athens.

Among the Jews, Dancing seems to have made a part of the religious worship on some occasions, as we learn from passages in the psalms; though we do not find either that or singing positively enjoined as a divine precept. In the christian churches mentioned in the new Testament, there is no account of dancing being introduced as an act of worship; though it is certain that it was used as such in after ages. At* Limoges, not long ago, the people used

* An ancient and considerable town in France.

used to dance round in the choir of the church which is under the invocation of their patron-saint, and at the end of the psalm, instead of the Glori Patria, they sung as follows, *Saint Marcel pray for us and we will dance in honour of you.*

Dancing would now be looked upon as the highest degree of profanation in a religious assembly; yet it is certain, that dancing considered as an expression of joy, is no more a profanation than singing, or simple speaking.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE VARIOUS MODES OF DANCING AMONG THE ANCIENTS.

PLATO reduces the Dances of the Ancients to three classes: first, the military dances, which tended to make the body robust, active, and well disposed for all the exercises of war: second the domestic dances which had for their object an agreeable and innocent relaxation and amusement: third, the mediatorial dances, which were in use at expiations and sacrifices. Of military dances there were two sorts, the Gymnopedique dance or the dance of children, the Enoplian or armed dance. The Spartans had invented the first for an early excitation of the courage of their children, and to lead them on insensibly to the exercise of the armed dance.

This

This childrens dance used to be executed in the public place. It was composed of choirs, the one of grown men; the other of children: whence being chiefly designed for the latter it took its name: they were, both of them, in a state of nudity: the choir of the children regulated their motions by those of the men, and all danced to the same time singing the poems of Thales, Alecman and Dionysiodotus. The Enoplian or Pyrrhic was danced by young men, armed cap-a-pee, who executed, to the sound of the flute, all the proper movements for attack or defence: it was composed of four parts; first the podism or footing, which consisted in a quick shifting motion of the feet, such as was necessary for overtaking a flying enemy, or for getting away from him when an over-match. The second part was the Xiphism, this was a kind of mock-fight in which the dancers initated all the motions of combatants; aiming a stroke, darting a javelin, or dexterously

dodging,

dodging, parrying or avoiding a blow or thrust. The third part called the Komes, consisted in very high leaps or vaultings which the dancers frequently repeated for the better using themselves occasionally to leap over a ditch or spring over a wall. The Tatiaconos was the fourth and last part; this was a square figure executed by slow and majestic movements, but it is uncertain whether it was every where executed in the same manner.

Of all the Greeks, the Spartans were those who most cultivated the Pyrrhic Dance, Athenaeus relates that they had a law, by which they were obliged to exercise their children at it from the age of five years. This warlike people constantly retained the custom of accompanying their dances with hymns and songs, the following was sung for the dance called Trichoria, said to be instituted by Lycurgus, and which had its name from its being composed of three choirs,

one

one of children, another of young men, and the third of old. The old men opened the dance, saying "in time past we were valiant," the young men answered "we are so at present," "we shall be still more so when our time comes" replied the chorus of children. The Spartans never danced but with real arms: in process of time, however, other nations came to use only weapons of wood on such occasions, nay it was only so late as the days of Athenaeus, who lived in the second century that the dancers of the Pyrrhic, instead of arms carried only flasks, ivy-bound wands, thyrsuses, or reeds but even in Aristotle's days they had begun to use thyrsuses, instead of pikes and lighted torches in lieu of javelins and swords. With these torches they executed a Dance called the "conflagration of the world."

Among the ancients there were no festivals nor religious assemblies, but what were accompanied

accompanied with songs and dances: it was not held possible to celebrate any mystery or to be initiated without the intervention of these two arts. In short they were looked upon to be so essential in these kind of ceremonies that to express the crime of such as were guilty of revealing the sacred mysteries they employed the word Keistie to be out of the dance. The most ancient of those religious dances, is the Bacchic, which was not only consecrated to Bacchus, but to all those deities whose festivals were celebrated with the greatest enthusiasm. The most grave and majestic was the Hyporchematic, it was executed to the lyre and accompanied with the voice. At his return from Crete, Theseus instituted a dance at which he himself assisted at the head of a numerous and splendid band of youth round the Altar of Apollo; the dance was composed of three parts, the strophe, the antistrophe and the stationary. In the strophe the movements were from the right to the left, in the

antistrophe

antistrophe from the left to the right: so that the stationary did not mean an absolute pause or rest, but only a more grave or slow movement. Plutarch is persuaded that in this dance there is a profound mystery; he thinks that by the strophe is indicated the motion of the world from east to west, by the antistrophe, the motion of the planets from west to east, and by the stationary, the stability of the earth: to this dance Theseus gave the name of Geranos or the Crane, because the figures which characterised it bore a resemblance to those described by cranes in their flight.

CHAPTER VI.

CURIOUS ANECDOTES RESPECTING THE ART OF DANCING.

FORMERLY they danced in France and elsewhere, the Pavan, a grave Dance that came from Spain, wherein the Dancers made a ring by passing one before the other like peacocks, with their long tails; the noblemen performed this serious dance with a cap of state and a sword, the judges in their long robes, the princes in their mantles, and the ladies with the tails of their robes trailing behind them. This was what they called the grand ball: such gravity would appear highly comic in our days, as all affectation is now laid aside, and nothing is called serious but what is really so. Such mimickries of the majestic as these, would be regarded as

childish, and treated with contempt. In the time of Lewis the XIV. they danced at court and at Paris, amiable Vainqueurs Passepies, Sarabands, Courants, &c. but all these grand matters have been dismissed and consigned to the wardrobe of ancient gallantry.

The grave Motesquieu has written on dancing as follows: "Dancing pleases by its lightness, by a certain grace, by the beauty and variety of its attitudes, and by its connexion with music, &c."

Noverre said of a celebrated opera dancer, "she is, whilst dancing, always tender, always graceful, sometimes a butterfly, sometimes a zephyr, at one moment inconstant, at another faithful, always animated by a new sentiment, she represents with delicacy all the shades of love"—such dancing is the true poetry of motion.

Marguerite

Marguerite de Valois, first wife of Henry the IV. of France, was beautiful in her person, very fascinating in her manners, and danced with such peculiar grace, that the celebrated DonJohn of Austria, went incognito from Brussels to Paris, to see her dance.

Conformable to the manners and etiquette of particular times and occasions, dancing has been subjected to many whimsical circumstances. During the reigns of Louis XIV. and XV. at the court-balls, the princess or other lady, whilst dancing a minuet, was always obliged to turn her front to the king, and consequently her back to her partner, who was under the same necessity.

Soon after the execution of Robespiere, the released prisoners instituted subscription-balls, which they called *bals a la victime:* the qualification for a subscriber was, that he or she must have lost a grand-father,

grand-mother, father, mother, sister, uncle, aunt, son, daughter, husband, or wife, by the guillotine. However the rage for this species of dancing assemblies, soon subsided.

The following story from Voltaire, may not be unappropriate:

Nabussan, King of Serendil, was one of the best princes of Asia, and gained the esteem of all those with whom he conversed; this good prince was continually praised, cheated and plundered: the receiver general of the kingdom set the example, which was faithfully followed by every one else. The king knew this, he had frequently changed his treasurer, but he had never been able to change the established custom, of dividing the royal revenues into two unequal parts, of which the smallest always reverted to the king, and the largest to the administrators. A wise old philosopher, who had not long been

been introduced at court, perceived this grievance, and proposed an infallible method of obtaining a man with clean hands for the office in question. The king greatly pleased, demanded how this might be done? by only, replied the sage, making all those who may offer themselves as candidates for the dignity of treasurer dance before you, and he who shall dance the lightest, will be infallibly the most honest man. You jest, said the king, this is a pleasant way of chusing a receiver general, what, do you pretend that he who cuts the best caper, will be the most able and upright financier; I will not engage he shall be the most able, answered the sage, but I assure you he will certainly be the most honest.

The old man spoke with so much confidence, that on the same day a royal proclamation was issued, enjoining all those who were inclined to become candidates for the

the office of receiver general of his majesty's finances, to present themselves on the first day of the crocodile-moon, in the king's anti-chamber habited in light silks.

At the appointed time they attended in number sixty-four; a band of music was waiting in the adjoining saloon, every thing was prepared for the ball: but the door of this saloon was shut, and in order to enter, it was necessary to pass through a short and rather an obscure gallery.

An usher attended, who was to introduce all the candidates separately through this passage, where each was left alone a few minutes, the king who was in the secret, had caused a vast number of jewels, gold coins and valuable trinkets, to be disposed in the gallery: when the competitors were assembled in the saloon, his majesty ordered them to dance.

Never

Never was dancing more heavily performed, and with so little grace; they all hung down their heads, their bodies were bent, and their arms and hands appeared as if glued to their sides.

What rogues, said the sage speaking softly, one only among them danced with agility, his face erect, his looks confident, his arms extended, his body straight, his steps firm, ah! the honest man, the brave man, said Nabussan. The king embraced this good dancer, and declared him to be the receiver general, and all the others were punished and fined with great justice. For every one of them, whilst in the gallery, had filled his pockets with such a heavy load, he could hardly walk. The king was sorry for the sake of human nature, that among sixty-four dancers, there should be sixty-three thieves. The gallery was afterwards called the Corridore of Temptation.

BOOK II.

PRACTICAL PART.

CHAPTER I.

STEPS, POSITIONS AND ATTITUDES.

BUT without further enquiry after matters that are now quite out of use, and consequently objects of mere curiosity, let us examine the nature of modern dancing; for we must not imagine, with the vulgar, that dancing consists of a jumble of freaks and gambols; the dance of people of education express some idea, and it was said of some dancers, that "all their steps were sentiments."

In dancing there are to be distinguished the attitude of the body, the figure, the positions, the bends, the risings, the steps,

the slides, the turns of the body, and the cadences. The attitude of the body requires the presenting of one's-self in the most graceful manner to the company. The figure is to follow the track prescribed to the steps in the dance; the positions are those of the varied attitudes which must be at once striking and easy, as also of the different exertions of the legs and feet in dancing; the bends are inflexions of the knees, of the body, the head, or the arms; the risings are the contrasts to the bends, the extention of the knee, one of these two motions necessarily precedes the other.

The step is the motion by the foot or feet from one place to another. The leap is executed by springing up into the air; it begins with a bend and proceeds with a quick extention of the legs, so that both feet quit the ground. The cabriole is the crossing, or cutting during the leap, before the return

of

of the feet to the ground, by the natural gravitation of the body. The slide is the action of moving the foot along the ground without quitting it. The turn is the motion of the body towards either side, or quite round. The cadence is the knowledge of the different measures, and of the times of movement most marked in music.

The regular figure is when two or more dancers move in contrary directions; ;that is to say, when one moves towards the right, the other moves to the left. The irregular line is, when the couples figuring together are both on the same side: commonly the man gives the right hand to the lady in the beginning of any dance, but the contrary one is given in a country dance. When a great number of dancers figure together, they are to execute the figure agreeable to the composition of the dance, with special attention to keep an eye constantly

stantly on their partner. Now to observe the figure, the dancers must place themselves at the beginning of the track upon which they are to dance, and comprehend the figure before they begin it: the couples must leave a sufficient distance between them so as not to confuse the figure.

There are commonly reckoned ten kinds of positions, which are divided into true and false, five each. There are three principal parts of the foot to be observed, the toes, the heel, and the ankle. The true positions are, when the two feet are in a certain uniform regularity, and the toes turned equally outward. The false are divided into regular and irregular: they differ from the true in that, the toes are either both turned inwards, or if the toes of one foot are turned outwards, the others are turned inwards.

In the first of the true * positions, the heels of the two feet are close together, so that they touch, the toes being turned out; in the † second, the two feet are open in the same line, so that the distance between the two heels is precisely the length of one foot; in the ‡ third, the heel of one foot is brought to the ankle of the other, or seems to lock in with it; in the § fourth, the two feet are, the one before the other, at the distance of a foot between the two heels, which are on the same line; in the ‖ fifth, the two feet are across, the one before the other, so that the heel of one foot is directly opposite to the toes of the other. There are also mixed positions composed of true and false, in combination which admit of such an infinite variety, and are in their nature so unsusceptible of description by words, that it is only the

* See Plate, Figure the 1st. † See Plate, Figure the 2d.
‡ See Plate, Figure the 3d. § See Plate, Figure the 4th.
‖ See Plate, Figure the 5th.

the sight of the performance that can give any tolerable idea of them.

Of the bends of the knee, there are two kinds: the one simple, the other forced. The simple bend is an inflexion of the knees without moving the heel, and is executed with the foot flat to the ground. The forced bend is made on the toes with more force and lower.

Much is to be observed on the head of steps, first; not to make any movement before having put the body in an upright posture, as nothing appears more ungraceful and vulgar than the contrary. The knees firm and straight, begin with the inflexion of the knee and thigh, advance one foot foremost with the whole foot on the floor, laying the stress of the body on the advanced leg. There are some who begin the step on the point of the toes, but that has an air of theatrical

theatrical affectation, which must be totally avoided in all kinds of dances in society. Nothing can be more noble than a graceful ease and dignity of step. The quantity of steps used in dancing, are almost innumerable, they are nevertheless reducible under five denominations, which may serve to give a general idea of the different movements that may be made by the leg, viz. the direct step, the open step, the circular step, the twisted step, and the cut step. The direct step, is when the foot goes upon a right line, either backwards or forwards. The open step is when the feet open; there are three kinds, one when they open outwards, another when describing a kind of circle, they form an in-kneed figure: a third, when they open sideways, this is a sort of right step, because the figure is in a right line. The round step is, when the foot in its motion makes a circular figure either inwards or outwards. The twisted step is, when the

foot

foot in its motion turns in and out. There are three kinds of this step, one backwards, the other forwards, and the third sideways. The cut step is, when the leg or foot seems to strike against the other, there are also three kinds of this step, backwards, forwards, and sideways. The steps may be accompanied by bendings, risings, sliding the foot in the air, the tip-toe, the rest on the heel, quarter turns, half turns, three quarter turns, and whole turns. There may be practised three kinds of bends, or sinkings in the steps, viz. bending before the step proceeds in the act of stepping, and the last of the step, the beginning or sink-pace is at the first setting off, on advancing the leg: the rising is just the reverse of the bend or sink pace which shall have preceded it.

Theatric dancing consists, first of the performance of a single dancer, second of dances by two, three, four, &c. third of complete

complete ballets, where the chief dancers sometimes perform alone, and sometimes with the chorus of figure dancers, fourth a dance of two, three, &c. with a pantomime ballet, by which is expressed, some fact in real or fabulous history, or some other design by the dance and by gesture. They always distinguish, however, in the theatric dancing, the high and the low, the noble and the graceful, and the serious dance, the high, the grand and the low, the comic, the antic dance, the pantomime, &c. Every theatrical dancer should apply himself to some particular rank of dancing, and there endeavour to excel according to the extent of his talents. The high dance is susceptible of leaps or bounds, and of entre-chats, or cuts of six or eight, the entre-chats, en tournant, the ail-de-pigeon, the gargulade and many other high steps, which must be seen to be understood.

CHAPTER II.

CHOICE OF MUSIC, BODILY DEFECTS, &c. REMEDIED.

A GOOD choice of music, is as essential to dancing, as the choice of words and the phraseology of a speech is to eloquence. It is the tune and time of the music that fix and determine the motion of the dancers, if the former be devoid of taste, the dance will be dull and unmeaning.

As to performers and their personal qualifications, the first point to which it is directed to pay attention when persons commence to learn to dance, at least as soon as they become capable of reflection, is their bodily formation. If one be conscious of any personal defect which can be reformed by application, study, or the advice and assistance

assistance of a judicious master, then it seems an essential concern, quickly to exert every effort, before the parts to be corrected have acquired strength and consistence, before nature has unalterably taken her bent, and the errors become too habitual and inveterate. Among other personal defects, there are two which deserve particular notice, the first is that of being in-kneed, the other bow-legged, a person is said to be in-kneed, when the haunches are straight, and incline inwardly, the thighs lie near and the knees are protuberant, and so close that they touch together at every step, even when the feet are at a distance, so that such a person from the feet to the knees, makes the figure of a triangle. In people of this formation, there is generally a clumsiness in the inside of the ankle, and a great elevation in the instep. The other defect of being bow-legged, is the opposite of the former, and exists in the same parts, namely, from the haunches

to

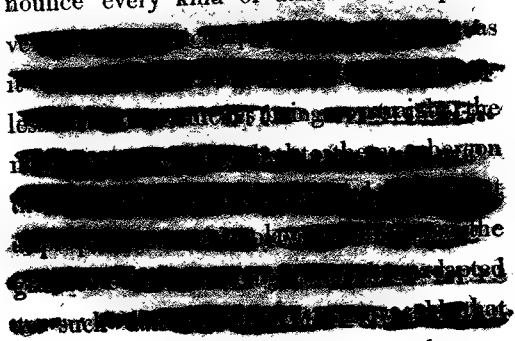
to the feet, which describe a sort of bow or arch; for the haunches being in this case hollow, the thighs and knees are at a distance and produce the same effect in the lower part of the limbs: so that they never can be brought in proper contact like those of a well-shaped person. Their feet are long and flat, the ankle juts out, a single view of these diametrically opposite defects, proves more forcibly than any argument, that the instructions which might correct the errors of one, of those defects would tend only to encrease the defects of the other, and that consequently their aim and study, ought to be correspondently opposite.

A person having the first defect, that of being in-kneed, must use the means which art furnishes him with, to widen the two closely connected parts. The first step to this end is to turn the thighs outwardly, endeavouring to move them in that position, by taking advan-

tage

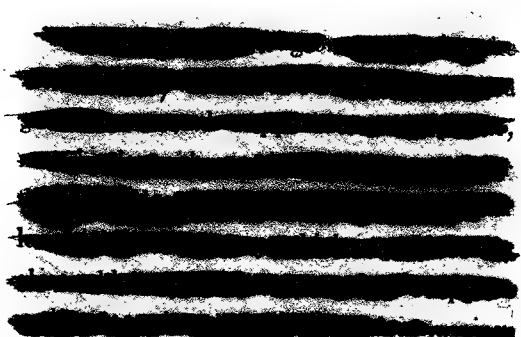
tage of the free rotation which the thigh-bone has in the cavity of the haunches; assisted by this exercise, the knees will follow the same direction and return as it were to their proper position. The knee-pan which seems intended to prevent the knee from being thrown too far backwards from its insertion, will stand perpendicularly over the point of the foot, while the thigh and leg thus placed, describe a line that will insure firmness and stability to the whole body.

Persons thus formed, should entirely renounce every kind of dance that requires



whatever

whatever they lose on the score of strength they regain in elegance and address. They are luxuriant and shining in the simplest parts, easy even in difficult ones, where no great efforts are required, just in their execution, elegant in their display, and their spring is always exerted with an infinity of grace, as they dexterously employ every resource which the motion of the instep can give them. These are advantages, which atone for want of personal strength, and in dancing, agility and address are always preferable to the mere efforts of force.



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CHAP.

necessary in dancing, [illegible] of the thigh; yet nothing is more natural to mankind than the contrary position. It is born with us, it will be superfluous in establishing this truth, to cite for example, the Asiaticks, the Africans, or any people who dance or rather leap and move without art or principle; if we attend only to children, or the rustic inhabitants of the villages, we will see that they will turn their toes inwardly. The other position is purely invention, and a proof far from equivocal of this fault, being an imaginary one, is that a painter would transgress as much against nature, as the rules of his art were

he

he to place the feet of his portrait in the situation of a dancer.

It is plain then that to dance elegantly, walk gracefully, or address with ease and manliness, we must absolutely reverse the nature of things, and force our limbs by artificial applications, to assume a very different situation from what they originally received. Such a change, however necessary in this art, can only be accomplished by laying its foundation in the early stages of infancy, when every muscle and bone is in a state of pliability, and capable of receiving any direction which we chose to give them.

The difficulty of attaining the outward position of the limbs is owing to our ignorance of the proper arts to be employed. Most beginners persuade themselves that it is to be acquired by forcing the feet to turn

outwards, and though this part may readily take such a direction, from their suppleness and being so easily moved, yet this method is so far false, as it tends to displace the ankle-bones, and besides has not any effect upon either the knees or the thighs.

Neither is it possible to turn the knees outwardly without the assistance of the thigh, the knees have only two motions, bending and extension, the one throwing the leg forwards, and the other backwards, they have no power therefore of themselves to determine or assume an outward position; but must eventually depend on the thigh, which entirely commands the lower parts of the body, and turns them in consequence of its own rotatory motion. So that in fact, whatever motion or position that takes, the knee, leg and foot are obliged to follow.

It has been maintained that a strong and nervous person ought to dance better than a slender and weaker, but experience daily proves the contrary. We see many dancers who beat the time with much strength and yet cannot spring to any perpendicular elevation. There are others again, whose slender form renders their execution less bold, and rather elegant than forcible, rather lively than nervous; but who can rise to an extraordinary height: it is to the shape and formation of the foot, and to the length and elasticity of the tendons that this power of elevation is originally owing. The knees, the loins and the arms, all co-operate in this action, the stronger the pressure on the muscles, the greater is the re-action, and the spring and leap are proportionably high. The alternate motion of the knees participate with those of the instep; the muscles of the body lend their assistance, which preserves the body in a perpendicular direction: while the

the arms, running imperceptibly to the mutual assistance of all the parts, serve as wings to counter-balance the machine.

Any kind of iron or wooden machine whatever, is dangerous and injurious to the limbs: the simplest and most natural means, are those which reason and good sense ought to adopt, and of these, a moderate but continual exercise is indispensable. The practice of a circular motion, or turning of the legs both inwardly and outwardly, and of boldly beating at full extent from the knee, is the only certain exercise to be preferred; it insensibly gives freedom, spring and pliancy, while the motions acquired by using a machine, have more an air of constraint than of that liberty and ease, which should shine conspicuous in them.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE DEPORTMENT OF THE BODY.

ART has furnished a substitute for nature, in the lessons of some excellent teachers, who have convinced their pupils, that when once they forego an attention to the deportment of the body, it is impossible to keep themselves in a right perpendicular line, and therefore all their exertions would be devoid of taste; that wavering in this part would be inconsistent with perpendicularity and firmness, and would certainly cause distortion of the shape and waist. The depressure and sinking of the loins deprive the lower part of that liberty, which is necessary to their ease and motion: hence the body undetermined in its positions, frequently drags the limbs constantly

constantly loses the centre of gravity, and therefore cannot recover an equilibrium, but after various efforts and contortions totally repugnant to the graceful and harmonious motions of good dancing.

In order to dance well, the body should be firm and steady; it should particularly be motionless, and free from wavering, while the legs are in exertion, for when the body follows the action of the feet, it displays as many ungraceful motions as the legs execute different steps, the performance is then robbed of its ease, uniformity, harmony, exactness, firmness, perpendicularity, equilibrium, in a word, of all these beauties and graces which are so essential to make dancing give pleasure and delight.

Many dancers are of opinion, that to be soft and luxuriant, the knees must be bent very

low, but in this case they are, most certainly, mistaken; for a more than ordinary flexion of the knees, gives rather a driness and insipidity to dancing; and dancers may be very inelegant, and jerk, as it were, all their movements, as well in bending very low, as in not bending at all. The reason will appear natural and evident, when we reflect that the time and motion of the dancer, are strictly subordinate to the time and movements of the music; pursuing this principle, it is not to be doubted, that when the flexions of the knees is greater than what the air or time of the dancing requires, the measure then drawls along, languishes, and is lost. To recover and catch again the time which this unnecessary flexion had destroyed, the extension of the knee must be equally quick; and it is this sudden transition which gives such a harshness and sterility to the execution, and renders it as disgustful, as the opposite fault of stiffness

and

and inflexibility. That luxuriant softness requires more to its perfection, than merely an exact flexion and extension of the knees; the spring of the instep must add its assistance, while the loins must balance the body to preserve these movements in proper bounds.

CHAPTER V.

ON KEEPING EXACT TIME IN DANCING.

THERE are many dancers, yet of an inferior class only, who can display a great variety of steps, badly enough chosen and often executed without either judgment or taste. But it is very uncommon to find among them, that exactness of ear, that rare, but innate talent of a dancer, which gives life to, and stamps a value upon steps, and which diffuses over all such steps, a spirit that animates and enlivens them.

There are some ears, stupid and insensible even to the most simple, plain and striking movements; there are others more cultivated and refined, that can feel and comprehend the measure, but cannot seize its intricacies:

and there are others again, to whom the most difficult airs and movements are easy and intelligible, and at once comprehended. It is nevertheless certain, that dancers may have a very perfect and nice feeling, and yet not make their feelings intelligible, if they have not the art of commanding these resources, which depend upon a proper exertion of the coup-de-pied. Aukwardness becomes visible, where the exactest proportion was necessary, and every step which would have been becoming, and have produced the happiest effect, had it been smartly introduced at the conclusion of the measure, will now be cold and lifeless, if all the limbs are in motion at once. It requires more time to move the whole body, than to exert one single member, the flexion and extension of the instep is more readily and quickly made, than the reciprocal motion of all the joints. This principle allowed, that those dancers are destitute of precision, who supposing they possess,

a musical ear, know not how to time their steps. The elasticity of the instep, and the more or less active play of the muscles add to the natural sensibility of the ear, and stamp value and brilliancy on the dance. The joint harmony of the springing from the movements of the music and the motions of the dancer, captivate even those whose ears are the most insensible and least susceptive of musical impressions.

Dancing, probably, is no where varied to such a degree, as in the provinces of Germany, where the well known dances of one village, are unknown in the adjacent hamlet. Their songs of mirth and merriment have no less different airs and movements, though they are all marked with that of gaiety. Their dances are pleasing and engaging, because the offspring of simple nature, their motions express joy and pleasure, and the exactness with which the whole is performed, gives a peculiar

peculiar agreeableness to their steps, gestures and attitudes.

A hundred persons assembled round an oak or some ancient pillar, seize the time at one instant, bound up and descend with the same exactness. If they wish to mark the measure with a coup-de-pied, all strike with one consent, or when they catch up their partners, you see them all in the air at an equal height, nor do they descend but at the precise note that marks the time. Hence their dances are so particularly animated, and the nicety of that organ, the ear, has the effect of giving their different motions an air of gaiety and variety, altogether exquisite.

Dancers, whose ears are untuned to harmony, display their steps without order or regularity, wander from their part, and pursue the measure without being able to reach it; devoid of judgment, their dancing has

has neither sentiment nor expression; and the music which directs their motions, regulates their steps, and guides their time, serves only to expose their imperfections and insufficiency. The study of music should therefore be applied for the purpose of obviating this defect, and giving more sensibility to the organ of hearing.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MUSIC AND DANCING, &c.

WITH regard to the dance of society, the manner of it is very much altered in this country. Formerly, for example, they danced cotillons, allemands, minuets and ballets; the modern practice of dancing is confined to the reel, the country-dance and the * jig. It would appear quite unfashionable to introduce any kind of cotillon-step in the present stile of dancing: a quick movement must therefore be adopted, in order to accord in time with the rapidity of the music. A multiplicity of steps or violent exertions must also be avoided, as they would only tend to fatigue the dancer, render him

* See Plate.

Ercoas Sculp.

A Jigg

him weak and incapable of continuing any length of time.

It may, indeed, be easily supposed that the track or figure of a dance may be determined by written or engraved lines; but these lines will necessarily appear so perplexing, so intricate, so difficult, if not impossible to seize in their various relations, that they are only fit to disgust and discourage, without the possibility of their conveying a satisfactory or retainable instruction: thence originated *choregraphy*, which is the art of noting on paper the steps and figure of a dance, by means of certain characters invented for that purpose, which are peculiar to this art, and are adopted by the French and sometimes by the English, as I have seen in a late publication of country dances called the "Treasures of Terpsichore," but which I think should be universally exploded, as unintelligible and useless; though

though nothing more than an elementary indication of the art, or an explanation, such as it is, of some of the technical terms of it.

It will not be expected that I should proceed to give a description of all the intricacies and combinations of steps, that are or can be executed in dancing, or enlarge on the mechanical particulars of the art: a dissertation on the latter would be insipid and disgustful, for the language of the feet and limbs, is addressed to the eyes, and not to the ears, and a detail of the former would be endless, since every dancer has his peculiar manner of joining, or varying the time. It may be sufficient, just to mention on this point, that it is in dancing as it is in music, and with dancers, as with musicians. Dancing does not abound with more fundamental steps than music with notes. But there are octaves, breves, semi-

breves,

breves, minums, crotchets, double and treble crotchets, times to count, and measures to follow. This mixture, however, of a small number of steps, and a few notes, furnishes us with a multitude of connections, and a variety of figures. Taste and genius will always find a source of novelty in arranging them in different manners; and to express various ideas, slow and lengthened, or quick and precipitate steps, and the time correspondently varied give birth to this endless diversity.

CHAPTER VII.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MINUET, REEL, AND COUNTRY-DANCE.

* THE minuet is allowed, by every professor of the art, to be the perfection of all dancing, but the difficulty of acquiring a knowledge of the true beauties of it, has discouraged many from attempting it.

The ordinary, undulating motion of the body in common walking, (as may be plainly seen by the waving line, which the shadow of a person's head makes against a wall, as he is walking between it and the afternoon sun,) is augmented in dancing into a larger quantity of waving, by means of the minuet-step, which is so contrived as to raise

* See Plate.

Miss Desiéaux in 1786

A Minuet

raise the body by gentle degrees, somewhat higher than ordinary, and sink it again in the same manner, lower in the going on of the dance. The figure of the minuet-path on the floor, is composed of serpentine lines, varying a little. When the parties by means of this step rise and fall most smoothly in time, and free from sudden starting and dropping, they come nearest to Shakespear's idea of the beauty of dancing in the following lines.

What you do,
Still betters what is done,
When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that, move still, still so
And own no other function.

WINTER'S TALE.

The other beauties belonging to this dance are the turns of the head and twist of the body

body in passing each other; as also gentle bowing and presenting hands, all which together display the greatest variety of movements, keeping equal pace with musical time.

The figure, which a number of people together form in country or figure dancing, makes a delightful play upon the eye, especially when the whole is to be seen at one view. The beauty of this kind of mystic dance, (as the poets term it), depends upon moving in a composed variety of lines, chiefly governed by the principles of intricacy, &c.

One of the most pleasing movements in * reel or country dancing, and which answers all the principles varying at once, is what they call the HAY. The figure of it altogether represents a number of serpentine lines, interlacing or intervolving each other.

Milton

* See Plate.

Brocas Jr.

A Reel

Milton, in his Paradise Lost, describing the Angels dancing about the sacred hill, pictures the whole idea in words,

Mystical Dance,
Mazes intricate,
Excentric, intervolved, yet regular
Then most, when most irregular they seem.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON AUKWARDNESS AND AFFECTATION, AS TO THE DEPORTMENT OF THE BODY.

THERE is no one but would wish to have it in his power to be genteel and graceful in the carriage of his person, could it be attained with little trouble and expense of time. The usual methods relied on for this purpose, among well-bred people, take up a considerable part of their time: nay, even those of the first rank have no other resource in these matters than to dancing masters.

Dancing undoubtedly is a very necessary accomplishment, and frequently very effectual in bringing about the business of graceful deportment; for the muscles of the body attain

attain a pliancy by this exercise, and the limbs, by the elegant movements in dancing, acquire both facility and grace: yet so few masters are capable of conveying instructions in this respect, for want of knowing the meaning of every grace, and whereon the beauty of it depends, that affectation and misapplications often follow. People who would wish to be elegant in their manner, and graceful in their persons, should avoid, as much as possible, every attitude that is constrained or affected; such as a stiff deportment of the body, a constant scraping and bowing on every occasion, viewing of the person, adjusting the dress, in walking turning out the feet too much, or an affected jirk of the body either one side or the other, or springing on the toes, all these movements are inconsistent with true ease and elegance. The step of a lady or gentlemen should be firm and steady, laying the entire foot on the ground, the arms falling gracefully from the shoulders,

and

and the body in an easy and unaffected position.

What can be more conducive to that freedom and necessary courage, which make acquired grace seem easy and natural, than being able to demonstrate, when we are actually just and proper in the least movement we perform. Whereas for want of such certainty in the mind, we appear stiff, narrow and aukward, particularly when we appear before our superiors.

The pleasing effect of moving the hand is seen, when presenting a card, letter or fan, gracefully or genteely to a lady, both in the hand moving forward and in its return. The hand must be waved in a serpentine line, but care must be taken that the line of movement be but gentle, and not two S like and twirling, which excess would be affected and ridiculous. Daily practising these

these movements with the hands, and at the same time, a gentle inflexion of the body, will in a short time render the person graceful and easy.

As to the motions of the head, the awe most children are in before strangers, till they come to a certain age, is the cause of their dropping and drawing their chins down into their breasts, and looking under their foreheads, as if conscious of their own weakness, or of something wrong about them. To prevent this aukward shyness, parents and tutors are continually teasing them to hold up their heads, which if they get them to do, it is with difficulty, and of course in so constrained a manner, that it gives the children pain, so that they naturally take all opportunities of easing themselves, by holding down their heads, which posture would be full as uneasy to them, were it not a relief from restraint. And there is another

misfortune in holding down the head, as it is apt to make them bend too much in the back; when this happens to be the case, they then have recourse to steel-collars and other iron machines; but in my opinion, it would answer the purpose much better by fastening a ribbon to a quantity of plaited hair, or round the forehead, so as it may be kept fast in its place, and the other end to the back of the frock, of such a length as may prevent them from drawing their chins into their necks, which ribbon will always leave the head at liberty to move in any direction except this aukward one they are so apt to fall into.

But until children arrive at a reasoning age, it will be difficult by any means, to teach them more grace than what is natural to every well made child.

The

The graceful deportment of the upper part of the body is most engaging, and sensible well-made children easily acquire it, therefore rules that are difficult to practice, are of little use, nay, rather of disservice.

Holding the head erect is but occasionally right, a proper inclination of it may be as graceful, but true elegance is mostly seen in moving it from one position to another.

CHAPTER IX.

ON GRACEFUL MOVEMENTS IN BOWING, COURTESYING AND ADDRESSING.

THE most graceful bow, on entering a room, is made by a gentle inflexion of the body, at the same time sliding the foot forward, with the arms falling carelessly before, and as the body rises, the arms will fall of course into their natural position.

Some aukward imitators of this elegant way of bowing, for want of knowing the true method, seem to bow with wry necks. In the low solemn bow to majesty, it should have but a very little twist, if any, as more becoming gravity and submission. The clownish nod, in a sudden straight line, is quite the reverse of these spoken of.

The

The most elegant and respectful courtesy, hath a gentle or small degree of the above graceful bowing of the head, as the person sinks, rises and retreats. On entering a room the foot should slide gently forward, with a graceful inflexion of the knees, at the same time turning the head over either shoulder, according as the company are arranged. On retiring, the foot is to slide backwards, with the whole foot on the floor, at the same time sinking as described above on entering. If it should be said, that a fine courtesy consists in no more than in being erect in person, at the time of sinking and rising, an automaton figure must be allowed to make as good a courtesy as any one.

It is necessary in bowing and courtesying to shun an exact sameness at all times, for however gracefnl it may be on some occasions, at other times it may seem formal and improper. Shakespeare seems to have meant

meant this ornamental manner of bowing, in Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's waiting woman,

"And made their bends adornings."

ACT II.

Dancing can be learned only by practice, by the aid of a good master, and by imitating those excellent dancers who are to be met with in the great world. They who would wish to dance gracefully, should take particular care in their youth, not to contract any bad habits, any steps or attitudes that are aukward constrained or affected. In the last place, Dancing is a matter of agility, an exercise that requires natural talents, which are called forth and cultivated by an able master, and who at the same time that he teaches his art, enables his pupils to deport themselves in society, with ease, with dignity and with grace.

POEM

ON THE

ART OF DANCING.

CANTO I.

IN the smouth dance, to move with graceful mien,
Easy with care, and sprightly though serene,
To mark th' instructions echoing strains convey,
And with just steps each tuneful note obey,
I teach. Be present all ye sacred choir,
Blow the soft flute and strike the sounding lyre?

Hail, loveliest art, that can'st all hearts ensnare,
And make the fairest still appear more fair,
Beauty can little execution do,
Unless she borrows half her arms from you;
Few, like Pygmalion, doat on lifeless charms,
Or care to clasp a statue in their arms.

A Venus, drawn by great Apelles' hand,
May for a while our wond'ring eyes command,
But still though formed with all the powers of art
The lifeless piece can never warm the heart;
So a fair nymph, perhaps, may please the eye,
While all her beauteous limbs unactive lie,
But when her charms are in the dance display'd,
Then ev'ry heart adores the lovely maid,
This sets her beauty in the fairest light,
And shows each grace in full perfection bright:
Then as she turns around, from ev'ry part,
Like porcupines, she sends a piercing dart;
In vain, alas! the fond spectator tries
To shun the pleasing dangers of her eyes,
For Parthian like, she wounds as sure behind
With flowing curls, and ivory neck reclined;
Whether her steps the Minuet's mazes trace,
Or the slow Louvre's more majestic pace,
Whether the rigadoon employs her care,
Or sprightly Jigg displays, the nimble fair;
At every step new beauties we explore,
And worship now what we admired before.

Now haste, my Muse, pursue the destin'd way,
What dresses best become the dancer? say?

The rules of dress forget not to impart,
A lesson previous to the dancing art,
The soldier's scarlet glowing from a far,
Shows that his bloody occupation's war;
Whilst the lawn-band beneath the double chin,
As plainly speaks divinity within;
The milk-maid safe through driving rains and snows,
Wrapp'd in her cloak and propp'd on pattens goes;
The woolly drab, and Irish broad-cloth warm,
Guard well the horseman from the beating storm,
But load the dancer with too great a weight,
And call from ev'ry pore the dewy sweat.
Rather let him, his active limbs display,
In Irish silk or glossy Paduasoy:
Let no unwieldy pride his shoulders press,
But airy, light and easy be his dress;
Thin be his yielding sole, and low his heel,
So shall he nimbly bound and safely wheel.
And now, ye youthful fair, I sing to you,
With pleasing smiles my yonthful labors view;
For you, the silk-worm's fine-wrought webs display,
And laboring, spin their little lives away,
For you bright gems with radiant colours glow,
Fair as the dyes that paint the heavenly bow,

For you the sea resigns its pearly store,
And earth unlocks her mines of treasured ore;
In vain yet nature thus her gifts bestows
Unless yourselves with art those gifts dispose.

CANTO II.

NOW see, prepar'd to lead the sprightly dance,
The lovely nymphs and well-dressed youths advance,
The spacious room receives its jovial guest,
And the floor shakes with pleasing weight opprest:
Thick ranged on ev'ry side with various dyes
The fair in glossy silks our sight surprise;
So in a garden, bath'd with genial show'rs,
A thousand sorts of variegated flow'rs,
Jonquils, carnations, pinks and tulips rise,
And in a gay confusion charm our eyes.

High o'er their heads with num'rous candles bright,
Large sconces shed their sparkling beams of light;
Their sparkling beams, that still more brilliant glow
Reflecting back from gems and eyes below;
Unnumber'd fans to cool the crowded fair
With breathing zephyrs, move the circling air:
The sprightly fiddle and the sounding lyre,
Each youthful breast with gen'rous warmth inspire;
Fraught with all joys the blissful moments fly,
Whilst music melts the ear and beauty charms the eye.

Now

Now let the youth, to whose superior place
It first belongs the splendid ball to grace,
With humble bow, and ready hand prepare,
Forth from the crowd to lead his chosen fair;
The fair shall not his kind request deny,
But to the pleasing toil with equal ardour fly.

But stay, rash pair, nor yet untaught, advance,
First hear the Muse, ere you attempt to dance;
By art directed o'er the foaming tide,
Secure from rocks the painted vessels glide;
By art the chariot scours the dusty plain,
Springs at the whip and hears the strait'ning rein.

To art our bodies must obedient prove,
If e'er we hope with graceful ease to move,
Long was the dancing art unfix'd and free,
Hence lost in error and uncertainty;
No precepts did it mind or rules obey,
But every Master taught a different way;
Hence ere each new born dance was fully try'd,
The lovely product ev'n in blooming dy'd,
Through various hands in wild confusion tost,
Its steps were altered and its beauties lost;

Hence

Hence o'er the world this pleasing art shall spread,
And every dance in ev'ry clime be read,
By distant masters shall each step be seen,
Though mountains rise and oceans roar between;
Hence with her sister arts, shall Dancing claim
An equal right to universal fame;
And Irish jiggs and reels shall live as long
As Raphael's paintings or as Virgil's song.

Would you in dancing ev'ry fault avoid,
To keep true time be first your thoughts employ'd,
All other errors they in vain shall mend,
Who in this one important point offend;
For this when now united hand in hand,
Eager to start, the youthful couple stand,
Let them a while their nimble feet restrain,
And with soft taps beat time to every strain,
So for the race prepar'd two coursers stand,
And with impatient pawing spurn the sand.

True dancing, like true wit, is best exprest,
By nature only to advantage drest,
'Tis not a nimble bound or caper high
That can pretend to please a curious eye,

Good

Good judges no such tumbler's trick regard,
Or think them beautiful, because they're hard.
'Tis not enough that ev'ry stander by
No glaring errors in your steps can spy,
The dance and music must so nicely meet,
Each note should seem an echo to your feet.

Now when the minuet, oft repeated o'er,
(Like all terrestrial joys) can please no more,
And ev'ry nymph, refusing to expand
Her charms, declines the circulating hand,
Then let the jovial country dance begin,
And the loud fiddles call each straggler in,
Quick busy hands and bridling heads declare
The fond impatience of the starting fair;
And see, the sprightly dance is now begun,
Now here, now there, the giddy maze they run,
Now with slow steps they pace the circling ring,
Now all confus'd, too swift for sight, they spring;
So in a wheel, with rapid fury tost,
The undistinguish'd spokes are in the motion lost.

The dancer here no more requires a guide,
To no strict steps his nimble feet are ty'd;

The

The muses' precepts here would useless be,
Where all is fancy'd, unconfin'd, and free;
Let him but to the music's voice attend,
By this instructed, he can ne'er offend;
If to his share it falls the dance to lead,
In well known paths he may be sure to tread;
If others lead, let him their motions view,
And in their steps the winding maze pursue.

Where can philosophers and sages wise,
Who read the curious volumes of the skies,
A model more exact than dancing name
Of the creation's universal frame?
Where worlds un-number'd o'er the etherial way,
In a bright regular confusion stray;
Now here, now there they whirl along the sky,
Now near approach and now far distant fly,
Now meet in the same order they begun,
And then the great celestial dance is done.

Thus through each precept of the dancing art,
The Muse has play'd the kind instructor's part,
Through ev'ry maze her pupils she has led
And pointed out the surest paths to tread;

No more remains, no more the goddess sings,
But drops her pinions and unfurls her wings.
On downy beds the weary dancers lie
And sleep's silk cords tie down each drowsy eye;
Delightful dreams their pleasing sports restore
And ev'n in sleep they seem to dance once more.

And now the work, completely finished, lies;
Which the devouring teeth of time defies
As long as nymphs shall with attentive ear,
A fiddle rather than a sermon hear,
So long the brightest eyes shall oft peruse
These useful lines of my instructive muse;
Each Belle shall wear them written on her fan,
And each bright Beau shall read them, if he can.

JENYNS.